

Advent Lutheran Church: Censorship – 8th Letter – December 14, 2011

To: Advent Lutheran Church Congregational Council
James Cassens, Mark Dentler, Tim Heine, Peggy Leonhardt, Leslie Holmes, Rodney
Leonhardt Jr., Betty Louis, Terry Rodgers, Joel Vest, Shirley Taloff
5820 Pinemont Dr, Houston, TX 77092

Cc: Mark S. Hanson, Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631
Email: info@elca.org

Cc: Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
Attn: Synod 4.D—Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)
12941 I-45 North Freeway #210
Houston, TX 77060-1243
281-873-5667 281-875-4716 - Fax
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Fm: Charlie Dean, member of Advent Lutheran Church, Houston, TX

Re: Regarding Disciplinary Action per Advent's Constitution Chapter 15 –
Discipline of a Member

Date: December 12, 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen of our Church Council:

This is the **eighth letter in a series** addressing **Council's censorship of non-exempt material** and the controversy growing out of it. It is my intent, by posting this on the Internet, to show that there is a process by which a lone church member can hold officers accountable, and especially so when the process has been hijacked by those who control it.

This letter addresses a **recent email** from James Cassens, the Council President, after I sent my 7th letter in this series dated December 12, 2011.

From: **James Cassens** jjcass1@att.net
to: charlie.dean81@gmail.com
cc: Pastor Beck <pbadvent@sbcglobal.net>,
Tim Heine <tim@heinefarm.com>
Date: Tue, Dec 13, 2011 at 10:01 PM
subject: Re: Citation to Appear Before Church Council
signed-by: att.net
: Important mainly because of the people in the conversation.

Mr. Charlie Dean,

You have been given this citation to appear before Church Council because Mr. Tim Heine, the Accuser, has brought charges against you. These charges have been filed with Pastor Beck in accordance with the Constitution. You may present your case before Council December 20, 2011 at 6:30 p.m. A decision will be made at that time, with or without your presence.

Respectfully,

James Cassens
Council President

The CITATION dated November 29, 2011 does not show that Tim Heine is the only accuser, or even that he is an accuser. If charges (and I assume from Mr. Heine) have been filed with Pastor Beck, I have not been made aware of it; this is the first I have heard of it. I see no evidence that the supposed filing with Pastor Beck is in accordance with the Constitution; this is the first I have heard of it.

I do not know what “case” Mr. Cassens refers to that I may present before “before Council December 20, 2011 at 6:30 p.m.” The case that I would present would depend on the charge(s) against me and that is not clear at this time. I see that “a decision will be made at that time, with or without [my] presence.” At this time, it is not clear what the issues will be.

I believe I should be notified early on, and within the four corners of the CITATION, how it is that Council alleges that reconciliation has been properly done. At this point I am clueless. I should not be surprised on December 20, 2011.

It is unclear how any act that I might have done amounts to a specific violation under any part of Advent’s constitution. At this point it is almost impossible to know in advance of the December 20th date how I should prepare a defense. Perhaps Council wants me to prepare defenses for thousands of possible scenarios, and then wait until December 20, 2011 to learn which ones Council chooses to use against me. **This is simply a form of harassment in retaliation for me pursuing the matter of Council censoring non-exempt material.**

Complainants should not be permitted to set out vague allegations in a CITATION, then show up at a hearing and grossly enlarge on the basis of their allegations and essentially make up the rules on the fly.

It appears that reconciliation has not been taken seriously by Council. Council is abusing the process and forcing me to discover what surprise tactics might be used against me on December 20, 2011. The Golden Rule is supposedly endorsed by all the great world religions, but perhaps Advent Lutheran Church has withdrawn its support.

It looks to me like Council officers are engaging in vindictive use of the Bible, vindictive use of Advent’s governing document, and vindictive use of the ELCA Constitution. If Council is trying to accumulate points for theft of information, vindictiveness, and ignorance, it is doing an outstanding job.

If Council officers were attempting to act in the best interest of the church they represent, they would be familiar with the Advent Constitution and the ELCA Constitution. They would

address preliminary matter seriously prior to charging into an accusatory hearing.

The major preliminary matter is that **officers** whose names appear on the letter of January 19, 2011 **are disqualified from sitting in judgment**. Complainants ought not be permitted to sign a complaint letter, then at the hearing assert that they are no longer complainants and are instead jurists to judge the person whom they complained of previously.

Further, I have a pending “Request to Disallow Amendments to Constitution” dated December 9, 2011 with the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod. My position in that matter is contrary to the position of Advent’s Council. It is difficult to image how it is possible that Council officers can be so oblivious to the concept of partiality, prejudice, and conflict of interest.

There is an assortment of preliminary matters that need to be addressed prior to an accusatory hearing before any tribunal, unless Council just wants a Kangaroo Court. However, officers are disqualified to deal with this matter as well for reasons stated above.

If the reconciliation process were to be seriously attempted, and if preliminary matters were to be seriously attempted, I do not believe this controversy would need to go to an accusatory hearing before any tribunal. As both sides to any controversy work their way through reconciliation, they narrow down what the issues are, and they may end up with no controversy. As both sides to any controversy work their way through preliminary matters, they further narrow down what the issues are, and frequently end up with no argument to go forward on. **Advent’s Council is much less interested in due process and due protection under the ELCA Constitution than it is with silencing me.**

Pastor Beck, who is the de facto Chief Executive Officer of Advent Lutheran Church, has been watching this go on. Also, the folks in the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod has been aware of this, and I suppose enjoying the amusement. And, Mark S. Hanson, Presiding Bishop, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has been knowledgeable of this.

A bit of levity

Dealing with any controversy is always easier when levity is added. It looks like Due Process and Due Protection of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has hit rock bottom. For a bit of levity on hitting the bottom, listen to Del Reeves - ***This Must Be The Bottom***.

< <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwRN9hjzcZI&feature=related> />

In light of Council’s failure to provide an explanation for its censorship of non-exempt material, along with other intricacies, I looked for an explanation elsewhere. I believe I found one. An editor for *The Redneck Lutheran Lowdown* had an interview with a church leader of another Lutheran church about a similar censorship problem. It might be instructive in our present controversy. The interview follows.

The Redneck Lutheran Lowdown

Interview with Chummy Editor and Otto Autocrat, councilmember of the Hardcore Lutheran Church.



Chummy Editor



Otto Autocrat

Chummy: Hi, Otto.

Otto: Hello, Chummy. I've been thinking about you. I'd like to tell you about the scalability of Hardcore Lutheran Church.

Chummy: Yes, I'm eager to hear about yall's scalability.

Otto: Scalability is the ability of a church to handle growing amounts of work and enlarged its ability to accommodate that growth.

Chummy: That sounds impressive.

Otto: It is. Our Crony Council works like this. Us cronies we can accommodate any amount of money the congregation gives. No matter how much the congregation donates, our Crony Council can substitute one mission for another to enlarge its need to match the money-- exactly, down to the penny.

Chummy: Hummmm. Do tell.

Otto: Just think of it in a commercial context. Think of the potential for economic growth.

Chummy: I'm trying to. I know there are business opportunities for churches.

Otto: And our Council don't pass many of 'em up either.

Chummy: A church is not—at least in theory—a business run for profit.

Otto: That may be true, but we don't hesitate to grow our business model. We're always a half-a-step ahead of the congregation's ability to pay. It is kinda like tying a carrot in front of a mule.

Chummy: I have never actually seen that done.

Otto: Well, I grew up on a farm and I know how it works.

Chummy: I understand your budgets are put before the congregation on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.

Otto: Yep, there ain't no line-item veto. That would be too political. We make 'em gulp it down.

Chummy: It looks like the congregation has no way to express a negative opinion on any single item on the budget.

Otto: No. That would be too political. That's another reason we keep a tight grip on the digital stuff. We just can't let that armadillo out of its cage.

Chummy: I never thought of it like that. You have such a cagey way of looking at stuff.

Otto: We don't want no durn nay-saying critics. We want folks to be relaxed and ambivalent. That makes for more compliant church members and tithers.

Chummy: Otto, you're so knowledgeable at managing people.

Otto: Yep. Giving too much voice to church members could lead to some of 'em taking on a contrarian role. We just can't have 'em thinking outside the box. They could develop some kind of a faux-intellectual condition.

Chummy: Uuuuhh. That could be serious.

Otto: Us cronies we like to use a false dichotomy when we vote on stuff. It is a type of logical fallacy that involves a situation where only two alternatives are considered, when in fact there are additional options.

Chummy: Like votin' on yall's budget?

Otto: You've go it, Chummy. There could be multiple options, but we make the church members choke on two of 'em. We force a choice. It makes 'em feel like they're either with us or against us. Of course nobody wants it to appear they're against the church, so they always vote to accept the budget.

Chummy: In its entirety?

Otto: Yep. Like swallerin' a raw egg. It all goes down. We keep a tight grip on things at Hardcore Lutheran Church.

Chummy: The degree to which you autocrats control your congregation is commendable. I'm impressed by yall's hot-footed theories. Your experience is the fodder of your intellect.

Otto: We're proud of our autocratic accomplishments. We like to engrain our members with wisdom while we are cleansing their souls.

Chummy: Our time is up. Thank you so much for the visit. But give us a spiritually uplifting ditty before you go.

Otto: My pleasure. Visit old Faron Young singing *It's a Great Life*.
< <http://youtu.be/A7ND1heD1Zk> />
